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Patman And The CIA

Wright Patman of Texas, long the congressional gadfly of the Federal Reserve Board and big city banks, for more than a year has turned his investigatory talents to tax-exempt foundations.

The chairman of the House Small Business subcommittee suspects that some of these institutions, set up ostensibly to dispense philanthropy, really are a means of avoiding the federal income tax collector.

Patman's most recent probing touched some sensitive nerves. In going into the affairs of the J. M. Kaplan Fund of New York City, the chairman found the CIA had been secretly slipping money to the fund.

The Internal Revenue Service had released this information to Patman in confidence. The chairman made the information public when he felt the CIA wasn't giving his investigation proper respect. Later the IRS convinced him "no matter of interest to the subcommittee relative to the CIA existed."

Perhaps taxpayers rightly should not know just why the CIA had a spending arrangement with a private philanthropic fund. After all, the CIA is hush-hush. But if the public is not supposed to know how the CIA spends its money, somebody in Congress should. Even Mr. Patman had to be told.